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Global Processes and National Dilemmas

The Uncertain Consequences of the Interplay of Old and New Repertoires of Social Identity and Inclusion

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the impact of the global cultural transformation that reconciles the values of equality and difference as parameters of the good life. Focusing on the way Brazilians perceive both equality and difference, we comment on the uncertain consequences of the interplay of old and new repertoires of social identity and inclusion. In particular, we look at the ethnoracial aspect, the most salient issue on the current debate about difference. Empirically, we analyze perceptions of inequality and difference among different segments of the Brazilian population. In particular, we focus on two issues. First, we discuss the interface of ethnoracial and national identifications in the country. Second, we explore perceptions about inequality and difference and their relationship, with special emphasis on attitudes towards affirmative action – the most traditional policy to take into account particular identities while distributing social resources – among distinct socioeconomic and racial groups.

Keywords: equality | difference | Brazil

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the acceleration of several global processes has posed growing challenges to nation states. Many even argue that the nation state itself is vanishing under the impact of forces that contribute to erosion of its stateness, and/or to strengthening of multiple social identities at the expense of nationhood. In their view, the historical construct that merged authority and solidarity is quickly losing its objective and subjective grounds, posing, therefore, the need for new institutional arrangements to ensure societal coordination.

Indeed, it is impossible to ignore that today the old nation-state model confronts unprecedented challenges that bring into question its old established pillars. Yet, there are no signs that we may already dispense with it in order to confront the very problems that seem to make it into an anachronism. It is sufficient to look at the historical constitution of actual nation states to realize that, while conforming to a common model, they have experienced unique combinations of past developments and current policy choices. Following the same reasoning, it follows that the common processes affecting nation states all over the world have different implications and require diversified responses as well. Thus, it seems crucial to incorporate a historical perspective when discussing the actual implications of global transformations.

While it is true that there are forces at play that make us aware of the fallacious conflation of society and nation states, it remains relevant to look at national contexts as meaningful frames in order to understand what is going on, and to explore possible policy alternatives to deal with emerging issues. Moreover, looking at ways people in different historical settings experience global transformations is relevant, not only to illuminate policy choices to deal with them, but also to enrich our theoretical understanding of the social changes at play. If we take into account, for example, one particular contemporary phenomenon, that of the growing demand for the recognition of differences that we observe all over the world, two general observations follow: first, the need to reconcile demands for equality and for difference recognition is a global challenge. The idea that social justice incorporates both equality and difference expresses a cultural change that is gaining momentum and has global consequences. Second, despite this common challenge, responses in each nation are multiple and must take into account typical trajectories of nation and state building.

If difference joins equality as a key demand of democracy, mature democracies and new ones face significantly different challenges. For example, in old established democracies, immigration and minorities pose the major challenges. To preserve

the democratic ideal of citizenship, they confront the problem of incorporating new partners who claim citizenship together with the recognition of their particular cultural identity, often in conflict with native non-excluded working classes of the dominant social group. In turn, for many of the democracies-in-the-making, the problems of incorporation involve people who are not newcomers, sometimes not even minorities, but who still do not have full access to citizenship rights. In such contexts, demands for difference recognition are much more entangled with class demands for equality, which are often allied to the demands of lower classes and so-called old social movements. Looking at these two typical situations, we can anticipate that they involve significant variations in the resources and limitations on the ability to meet demands for inclusion and recognition. While in both cases identity recognition is a salient issue, the place of nationhood and the role of class cleavages are certainly something that set them apart.

In this article, we look at the particular case of Brazil, exploring what has been the impact of the global cultural transformation that reconciles the values of equality and difference as parameters of the good life there. Focusing on the way Brazilians perceive both equality and difference, we comment on the uncertain consequences of the interplay of old and new repertoires of social identity and inclusion. In particular, we look at the ethnoracial[1] aspect, the most salient issue on the current debate about difference. In the following pages, we first present our theoretical assumptions about the role of difference in the contemporary world. Then, in section 3, we proceed to systematize the historical processes through which equality and difference have been negotiated in nation-state building, and the contemporary dilemmas of the re-emergence of difference as a key category for citizenship. Section 4 briefly presents the Brazilian historical negotiation of equality and difference, with a particular focus on the origins and development of racial differences, so as to contextualize the contemporary debate over difference and inequality. In section 5, we turn to empirical evidence on perceptions of inequality and difference among different segments of the Brazilian population. In particular, we focus on two issues. First, we discuss the interface of ethnoFtableracial and national identifications in the country. Second, we explore perceptions about inequality and difference and their relationship, with special emphasis on attitudes towards affirmative action – the most traditional policy to take into account particular identities while distributing social resources – among distinct socioeconomic and racial groups.

We observe that Brazilians do not seem to understand the interface of racial and national identification as dilemmatic. In addition, while socioeconomic exclusion and

1 Although we are aware of the different histories of these concepts, in this study we use race and ethnicity as similar concepts – an arbitrary set of social classifications that rely on phenotype, culture, and religion to create distinctions in society – therefore our use of the term ethnoracial.

racial prejudice are acknowledged by all groups, the use of racial identification as a tool for redistribution is strongly opposed by the elites and by respondents with higher education in general, but accepted by most Brazilians who seem to perceive racial differences as a legitimate criterion for social redistribution. Yet, when asked to rank their preferences, regardless of social position and educational background, Brazilians seem to prefer universal criteria to targeted or particular ones. In other words, equality and difference are not perceived by the majority as contradictory or exclusionary, but most seem to establish a hierarchy between these two criteria, placing equality on top. The complementarities of policies of status and recognition in Brazil may allow the emergence of a novel model aiming at society-building, which may successfully replace the historical model behind the building of nation-states. The fact that this remains an open question only adds importance to research on the subject.

2. Conceptual Caveats

While discussing the growing importance of discourses of recognition and difference in the political and global realms, it is critical to elucidate how we understand these concepts in order to avoid essentialist or reductionist definitions and assumptions.

First, we believe that religion, gender, ethnic and racial differences have long played a role in nation-building processes and exchanges. The key transformation that has taken place in the past few decades is the way these diverse identities are perceived and acknowledged as legitimate in the public and political debates. As we discuss next, despite the long history of ethnic conflicts in most countries, the debates between universal and multicultural national identities are relatively recent. Such a change is a result of global and local transformations (Featherstone, Lash and Robertson 1995).

Second, although diverse identities have always played a role in nation-building, ethnoracial and religious differences are not essential ones. They are social constructs created through the definition of salient boundaries between us and them (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2005). Which boundaries are salient and which are erased is a matter of socioeconomic, cultural and institutional dynamics, and not a consequence of intrinsic meanings.

Third, the salience of boundaries involves both structural and cultural processes, which can be transformed not only in the long run, but also through the recent global and transnational exchanges. As we will discuss in the case of Brazilian blacks, although the socioeconomic differences between blacks and whites are a constant in Brazilian history, especially due to slavery, the salience of black identities has varied according

to the political environment and to the cultural repertoire available for collective action (Sansone 2003).

Fourth, the construction of difference in the public space usually involves a double process of categorization and identification, as defined by Richard Jenkins (1997). Categorization refers to processes of stigmatization, discrimination, and prejudice in which difference is imposed. Identification refers to processes of collective mobilization through cultural or social action in which difference is chosen.

Finally, and this is one of our key arguments, equality and difference interact in multiple ways through distinctive historical processes. Therefore, the policy solutions to create a balance between equality and difference might involve the erasure of boundaries, the strengthening of subordinate identities, or even the shifting of focus to hegemonic or majority (and usually invisible) identities, as discussed by Nancy Fraser (2000). The fact that the relationships between equality and difference do not fit a single pattern makes it worth looking at human agency, at perceptions, and subjective experiences as relevant analytical dimensions. Next, we provide a brief overview of the distinctive ways in which equality and difference have been constructed in modern nation building strategies.

3. The Interface of Equality, Inequality and Difference: Historical Approaches and Persisting Dilemmas

Nation-states are generally understood as comprising: (1) a defined territory; (2) a set of distinct institutions and laws; and (3) a shared culture and history that together form a national polity (Calhoun 1993). While the universal definition of a nation-state stresses the sovereignty and universal rights of national subjects, a moral definition emphasizes its shared values and cultures. The debates about the origins of nation-states are endless, and it is not our goal to summarize them here (for a sociological approach to this issue, see Rokkan 1969, Rokkan and Eisenstadt 1973). Our intention here is to identify distinct approaches that have been used to identify – either theoretically or normatively – the re-emergence of difference as a central political issue.

3.1. Downplaying Difference and Constructing Equality in the Old and New Worlds

In pre-modern societies, taken-for-granted differences were the basis for social hierarchies, and equality was not an issue. Equality as a national ideology emerged through the downplaying of differences (ethnic, linguistic, religious, caste-based) and

through the emphasis on communalities based on belonging to the same territory and obeying the same authority (Elias 1982). Such equality was the basis for the emergence of the notion of universal citizenship (Bendix 1964).

Universal citizenship is generally understood as the ensemble of civil, political, and social rights and duties attributed to the members of a national polity (Marshall 1950). Despite differences across countries, modern European nation-states were created on the basis of this universal principle, i.e. rights were guaranteed on a universal basis to all members of the polity rather than relying on particular religious, language, or family-based traits. Universal rights were defined as the basis for equality, and equality was defined in opposition to inequality of treatment. Difference was generally underplayed as an issue, but only when it represented a threat to the unity of the nation states (e.g. challenging the authority), it was deliberately repressed.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the modern model of nation-state was "exported" to the new world. In these countries, artificial borders were often drawn cutting across ethnic communities. Moreover, the successive inflow of European migrants, and in many cases, a history of massive slavery made the notion of a shared history and culture throughout a newly-sovereign territory almost inconceivable. Yet, elites in each of these new nations – with different degrees of success – invested in forging the creation of national identities with "imagined" components of a shared national culture, usually in opposition to colonial powers (Anderson 1983). Unlike European nations, many of which had at least a common territory and history as a basis to invent traditions, in the new world, traditions had to be invented from scratch. In many cases the strategy was to draw together various elements of the different cultures and ethnic groups, creating the new national identity as a melting pot, even if in practice the process usually meant assimilation in the mainstream elite European-oriented local culture.

The term melting pot is usually used with the North American experience in mind. There, melting pot was to include Europeans coming from different countries, within a common community of Americans. In Latin America, the idea of melting pot was translated into ideas of racial democracy in Brazil as well as the concepts of *raza cósmica* in Mexico and *criollismo* in Peru (Wade 1993, 1997). They all refer to this desire of having a nation-state that includes all groups equally, usually eroding the particular racial and ethnic identities that existed inside national borders.

For our discussion, it is important to stress the differences between the construction of citizenship through universal equality and melting pot models. In particular, we

want to point to the different definitions of equality and their relation to inequality and difference in these two models. Within a universal equality framework, equality is opposed to inequality of opportunities (even if inequality of outcomes might still be taken for granted) and difference is underplayed as an issue. In the melting pot approach, equality is opposed to difference (of race, ethnic or religious identification) and inequality is underplayed, and even taken for granted through hierarchical images of societies, a strategy usually followed in Latin American countries. These two models, however, coincide in their emphasis on equality, rejection of political organization around ethnoracial identities, and definition of the nation-state as ethnoracially neutral (Kymlicka and Norman 2000). The re-emergence of difference as a key political category brought strong criticisms to these assumptions, defined as assimilationist in their practice, i.e. subordinate and minority groups are expected to be assimilated into the dominant culture, in order to be part of the nation.

3.2. The Re-emergence of Difference: Multiculturalism and its Dilemmas

In recent decades, tensions between equality and difference have gained importance. In Europe, the substantial decline in inequality and the growth of international immigration have brought difference to the forefront. European nations have been forced to deal with new types of differences, which had often been seen as incompatible with their national cultural and values.

Actually, in North America, it is possible to identify signs of the salience of difference much earlier. Identified as a land of opportunity, the continent attracted a large influx of immigrants since colonial times. In part due to their early independence and autonomy from their colonizers, the United States and Canada rapidly moved from a model of melting pot to one of universal citizenship – allowing greater rights to all groups, and growing freedom of speech, faith, and association. The United States, in particular, was defined early to be a model of equality and democracy (Tocqueville and Reeve 1835). Yet, it is in this society that the tensions between equality and difference first emerged. Because in both definitions of equality – as a melting pot and as universal equality – blacks were systematically excluded, the black civil rights movement and, later on, the black power movements, brought the issue of difference to the forefront.

It was particularly after the end of WWII that the consolidation of the geo-political hegemony of the United States of America (U.S.) occurred, and, after the renewed intensification of global flows, that the multicultural model emerged as an alternative to universal citizenship, and it became increasingly popular. From the 1960s onwards, especially in Europe and North America, multiculturalism has been defined in multiple

ways, but one of its core elements is to argue that the recognition of difference is an important source of inequality. Therefore, it is essential to guarantee that all ethnoracial groups in each society have the right to organize around their identities to demand citizenship rights – not only in relation to redistribution (equality), but also recognition (the right to difference). In other words, the multicultural model adds a fourth element to Thomas H. Marshall's three levels of citizenship (civil, political, and social): cultural citizenship (Marshall 1950; Ong 1996).

Yet, to stress difference did not necessarily solve the tensions between equality and difference – or between difference and inequality. In our view, three central dilemmas have characterized current debates about multiculturalism. First, difference might undermine the basis of national solidarity. Such a dilemma stresses a direct relationship between the strengthening of ethnoracial, religious, or language identities and the weakening of national identities. In Europe, such a dilemma commonly assumes a distinction between old differences versus new differences (the ethnic, religious, and cultural differences of new immigrants and ethnic groups). In recent years the multicultural model has been accused of being the flip side of assimilation, artificially separating ethnoracial groups, "sleep-walking into segregation", and reinforcing ethnoracial stereotypes with artificial recognition policies. Second, difference may be a threat to universalism, and therefore to equality itself. Critics of multicultural policies argue that they violate individual rights by implementing measures that undermine meritocracy. Here, universal rights are defined as the only way to guarantee equality. Third, the emphasis on difference might hide real structural inequalities of society. Here a progressive paradox is identified, suggesting that there may be a trade-off between social welfare and multicultural policies: while the former stresses redistribution, they argue, the latter conforms to political correctness that may hamper effective distributive justice (Vasta 2007).

Criticisms apart, international agencies have generally adopted the multicultural approach, justifying it as an effort to deepen democracy, rather than a threat to it. They have supported indigenous groups in their land and self-government demands; sub-state minorities in their claims for official recognition and enhanced regional autonomy, as well as immigrants' demands for recognition. All such claims, despite ups and downs, have seen general progress in the past decades (Kymlicka and Bashir 2008). Multicultural values and policies have expanded throughout the world, leading to the re-emergence of the value of difference, now converted into a global ideology. Even though critics have denounced such a spread as a new variant of American imperialism (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999), the recognition of difference has become a fact that all

societies feel pressured to respond to, even when it is for different reasons and through different processes.

In this paper, we argue that, instead of focusing on the trade-offs between equality and difference, we can learn more from analyzing the multiple solutions that have emerged from these new dilemmas. Instead of looking for imported solutions, sociologists must take into consideration the distinctive dynamics through which the values of difference and equality have been constructed in each context. In other words, in order to reconcile difference and equality, one must take into account the variable roles they play in different contexts as elements of inclusion and exclusion.

In the remaining pages, we analyze the Brazilian case in order to explore how equality and difference have been negotiated in a country that has come from a model of racial democracy to the implementation of racial quotas. In particular we focus on the perceptions of Brazilians about three dilemmas relating to the re-emergence of difference as a democratic value: the relationship between difference and national unity; the relationship between perceptions of difference and inequality, and the attitudes towards universal versus targeted policies. Before this, we provide a brief overview of the historical background in Brazil, with a particular focus on the construction of notions of ethnoracial difference.

4. The Brazilian Case: Durable Inequalities and Racial Democracy

Brazilian nation-building, and its historical negotiation of equality, inequality and difference, is closely related to the history of slavery of people of African descent and the near elimination of the native population.[2] The introduction of forced labor in the colonies of the New World inaugurated a form of slavery unknown in previous history. While in antiquity, military disputes were the mechanisms through which people were enslaved, and slavery reflected power competition, here economic motivation was the force behind the trading of human beings as labor force. In fact, slavery had already disappeared in Europe when, under conditions of labor scarcity and land abundance in the colonies, forced labor was adopted as an economic solution in different parts of the Americas (Reis and Reis 1988). Despite significant variations in slave systems

2 Although present in the founding myth of Brazilian racial democracy, today the indigenous in Brazil represent about one percent of the population and have a different status as citizens in the country: they usually live in reserves and have special systems of education and political representation. Since 1990, the number of people who self-identify as indigenous has increased in the country – probably a product of the value of ethnic identification (previously the indigenous population was officially classified as brown, the same term used for those who come from the mixture of black and white families). Although this is also an interesting topic, in this paper we focus on the Brazilian black population – which represents roughly half of the population and has been the focus of most debates about multicultural identification and affirmative action in Brazil.

across colonial areas, slavery set the terms for race relations throughout the continent. In this context, race became a cultural signifier of difference and the origin of durable inequalities (Tilly 1998). Yet, the way difference and inequality were elaborated varied significantly inside the Americas as comparative research has long pointed out (Freyre 1956 [1933]; Tannenbaum 1946).

Variations in race relations between Brazil and the United States, the two largest slave systems in the continent, have long drawn particular research attention. Brazil was the largest importer of African slaves, and the U.S. was second-largest. It has been estimated that a total of four million African slaves were brought to Brazil and one million to the U.S. (Curtin 1969). The high figures for Brazil have been explained not only by the size and scope of its plantation system, but also by the significantly lower rate of reproduction of the slave population there. As it has been observed that, unlike what took place in the U.S., slave families brought from Africa were not kept together in the Brazilian case. Family dismantling and extremely adverse labor conditions did not favor demographic reproduction (Curtin 1969). As a consequence, the supply of forced labor had to be constantly renewed. On the one hand, this helps to understand why legal attempts at stopping the African slave trade only succeeded under acute external pressure, i.e. when the British Navy pointed cannons towards Rio de Janeiro in 1850 to prevent the entry of new slaves (Bethell 1970; Conrad 1972). On the other hand, the dismantling of slave families in Brazil (versus the strategy of slave breeding in the U.S.) in conjunction with the predominance of male colonizers (who came without their families to explore the country) encouraged interracial mixing: which was sometimes consensual, but mostly forced.

In fact, what most sharply differentiated race relations in Brazil from those in the U.S. was the way racial boundaries were monitored in each context. While in the U.S., racial intermixing was socially banned, as indicated by the strict legislation forbidding interracial mixing, in the Brazilian context, miscegenation was not only largely tolerated, but, in time, it became positively valued as a signifier of indifference to race as a source of difference. The construction of the racial democracy myth, which became the official ideology of nation building from the 1930s onwards, began with this transition of the understanding of racial mixing in Brazil from being its main burden to its most distinguishing positive feature.

Nowadays, with a population who self-identifies as *branco* (white, 47.4%), *pardo* (brown, 43.1%) and *preto* (black, 7.3%), Brazil can be considered to be a multiracial country (see IBGE 2010). The high percentage of browns has been historically considered as evidence of the absence of rigid color lines and taken as proof that Brazilians do not

believe in racial differences, and that they would rather take for granted the equality of humankind. The multiple color shades that centuries of racial intermixing have produced in Brazil is reflected in the indicators that show no substantive differences can be identified between blacks and whites. According to such a perspective, racial inequality can be recognized – and it is undoubtedly reflected in national census statistics – but it is defined as distinct from racial difference. Racial inequality is attributed to peculiar historical conditions that provided different opportunities, which explain why poverty mostly afflicts blacks, but also a large number of whites. Yet, race is taken to mean simply the color of one's skin, and racism and prejudice are generally perceived as products of human ignorance rather than a structural characteristic of Brazilian society, as we will discuss later.

Variations of this thesis, generally referred to as racial democracy, have long been discussed, and not just in academic circles. Strong controversies have mobilized public opinion, and debates have seen heated arguments both for and against the thesis, especially since the implementation of racially-targeted affirmative action during the 1990s. For some, the myth of racial democracy has mystified race relations, preventing the mobilization of blacks against long-established discriminatory practices. In their view, the rise of race consciousness among people of African descent is a crucial ingredient to promote effective equality between blacks and whites (Hanchard 1994). To others, it is on the contrary, the growing awareness of racial identification that endangers relations between blacks and whites in Brazil, creating dangerous divisions (Fry 2007). They argue that postulating a black identity intrinsically promotes the relevance of race and therefore contributes to convert color into an essential difference.

A third posture is gaining momentum, and some believe it may succeed in dissolving the rigidity of the "either/ or" dichotomies in interpreting difference and inequality between blacks and whites in the country. A number of studies have shown that among the worse-off, blacks have lower chances of social mobility (Hasenbalg 1979; Henriques, Barros and Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada 2000; Silva 1979). Through the debate of inequality, racial differences have re-emerged as salient issues, and recognition has become a legitimate demand (Guimarães 2006, 2007; Piovesan 2006). Supporters of such a position may differ significantly as to the legitimacy of a black identity as well as with regard to support of racially-targeted social policies. Yet, as evidence to be shown in the following pages suggests, the distinctive positions vis-à-vis the issue do not necessarily put blacks and whites on opposite sides; most Brazilians do not seem to perceive the negotiation of equality and difference as dilemmatic.

4.1. How Brazilians Deal with Equality, Inequality and Difference

In order to better understand how the macro cultural changes we described are perceived by Brazilians, in the next sections we rely on data from a number of survey studies and also on research projects we have been conducting in the past two decades.[3] Our aim is to analyze how Brazilians have been negotiating the dilemma of achieving greater equality and recognition of difference. First, we discuss perceptions about the national question in Brazil – or how Brazilians interpret the interface of national and ethnoracial identification. In order to discuss this issue, we analyze trends in racial identification in Brazil and how they are related to national identification as well as to attachment and evaluation of Brazilian society. Second, we present data on attitudes towards inequality, equality and difference, with a particular focus on the perception about the trade-off between universal and racially-targeted policies. In particular, we look at survey data on perceptions about inequality and racism, as well as support for racial quotas, which are the most common type of affirmative action implemented in Brazil today. Because we argue that class differences are key to understanding how equality and difference are understood, we analyze how strategic elites evaluate the socioeconomic and ethnoracial dimensions of inequality, and how their perceptions compare to those of the broader population.

4.2. The National Question: Racial Identification in Brazil

The relationship between ethnoracial and national identification has been largely discussed as a political philosophy issue (see Appiah 1992; Chatterjee 1993; Kymlicka 1995). The literature reveals that, until recently, there was widespread belief in the existence of a contradiction between ethnoracial identities (traditionally understood as local and parochial) and national or, more recently, supranational identities defined, respectively as modern and cosmopolitan. In this perspective, ethnoracial diversity was commonly defined as a threat to democracy and nation-building (Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1977). The multicultural approach appeared in opposition to this view. It argued that ethnoracial identities could co-exist with strong national attachment, and that ethnoracial politics enhance, rather than threaten, democracy. Furthermore, multiculturalists sustain that the progress of globalization might lead to strengthening of these identities (Kymlicka 1995; Pieterse 1996).

3 Namely, we rely on the Datafolha National surveys on Race Relations (Turra, Venturi and Datafolha 1995; Datafolha 2008), the Perseu Abramo National Survey on Race Relations and Discrimination (FPA 2003), the 2003 Datafolha Utopias Survey (Datafolha 2003), the 1994 IUPERJ Strategic Elites Survey (not available for public use), the 1995 World Values Survey (WVS 1995), the 2001 Latinobarómetro (Latinobarómetro 2001). All but the last two (downloaded from their own websites) are available at the Consórcio de Informações Sociais website www.nadd.prp.usp.br/cis/index.aspx (last access 05/09/2013).

The issue has been largely approached from a macro historical perspective, in studies comparing nation-building in different countries (e.g. Bleich 2005; Brubaker 2001; Marx 1998). Political scientists and social psychologists have also tried to measure how national attachment and ethnoracial identification are related through social attitudinal surveys, with mixed results (e.g. Citrin 2004; Gibson 2006; Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin and Pratto 1997). As we see it, one of the reasons behind these mixed results is that the interface of ethnoracial and national identifications varies significantly from context to context.

Based mostly on macro historical and cultural studies, the general assumption about Brazilian society postulates that racial identification is not salient, while national identity is strong across different racial groups. There has been, however, very little empirical research about the ways national and racial identities relate in the country. In fact, we could only find a handful of studies that empirically addressed this issue, most of them relying on international survey data. Their results show no contradiction between race and national identification.

One of the most discussed findings about race relations in Brazil is that, when asked open-ended questions about their race or color, Brazilians use a large number of terms to self-identify. Thus, for example, in 1976, a national survey found 136 categories, while another in 1998, lists 142 (Schwartzman 1999). Such findings have commonly been used to support the idea that racial identification in Brazil is blurred, or poorly-defined, and therefore weak. Yet, as pointed out by several analysts, the majority of the population is concentrated in a few traditional categories, mostly those that have been mentioned in the census since the late nineteenth century: *branca* (white), *parda* (the formal census category for brown), and *preta* (the formal census category for black). The informal category of *morena* (literally brunette or tanned) is also very common, and includes people of all colors. Taken together, these categories comprise about 90 percent of the total, indicating a high degree of consistency in racial identification over time and in different regions (Telles 2004).

However, evidence also points to a few significant changes. In analyzing survey results over time it is possible to see a growing identification as *negro* in Brazil, and this growth is stronger among *pretos* and *pardos* with higher education (Datafolha 2008; Sansone 2003; Turra, Venturi and Datafolha 1995, own tabulations). *Negro* is today the most politicized racial identification, supported by black movements that aim to include all blacks and browns (perceived as having a shared African ancestry) in one group. A survey conducted in 1995 and replicated in 2008 found that *negro* identification more than doubled, increasing from 2.6% to 7% of the total population during that period.

Among *pretos* and *pardos* with higher education, the group in which this identification had the highest increase, the number rose from 12.6% to 25% (Datafolha 2008; Turra, Venturi and Datafolha 1995, own tabulations). Other studies have shown that when open-ended questions are asked about race, the category *negro* appears more often than the historical census category *preto* in all regions of the country. These changes confirm that the Brazilian racial order is changing and previously meaningless ethnoracial identities may acquire new politicized contents that may play a role in nation and state-building.

Yet, surveys that have tried to capture the interface of race and nation in Brazil do not identify tensions between national and racial identities. Instead, they point to the fact that Brazilians seem to interpret racial and national identification as non-dilemmatic. Thus, for example, in 1995, the World Values Survey (WVS 1995) asked Brazilians if they would define themselves mostly according to national or racial identification. Almost half of the respondents (46.9%) mentioned they were first of all Brazilian, and only in second place did they bear a racial or ethnic identity. The percentages of those who chose dual-identities over national identity were slightly higher for blacks (48%) than for whites (43.4%), yet differences were not substantial (WVS 1995). Similarly, the 2001 *Latinobarómetro* asked if individuals felt closer to their ethnoracial or national identities. Again, 47.8% of Brazilians chose their national identity, while the remainder chose racial identities (Latinobarómetro 2001). Qualitative data confirms that for most people the choice of racial versus national identifications is meaningless – which would explain the lack of patterns across racial groups.

We also observe that people from all census racial groups – *preto* (black), *pardo* (brown), *amarelo* (Asian), *indígena* (Indian) and *branco* (white) – tend to agree that Brazil is an example of racial and cultural mixing to be followed by different countries. In addition, the same survey shows that Brazilians from all races and classes are similarly proud of Brazilian achievements in different areas (culture, music, democracy, etc.). As suggested in Table 1, Brazilians across different races evaluate the country similarly and are equally proud of its achievements, both in general and with regard to very specific aspects, including race relations.

Table 1: Brazil as an Example of Racial Mixing. Answer to the Question: "Would you agree that Brazil is an example of racial mixing to be followed by other countries?", by census categories for race (%)

	White (*branca*)	Black (*preta*)	Brown (*parda*)	Total*
Yes	75.4	74.8	75.7	75.6
No	17.8	17.4	18.3	18.0
Does not know	6.8	7.7	6.0	6.4
Total	100	100	100	100
	(1,198)	(310)	(617)	(2,823)

*Includes *indígena* (indigeneous), *amarela* (Asian) and other racial identities

Source: Datafolha 2003, own tabulations.

In short, unlike North American and South African results, among others, these findings show that people across all racial groups in Brazil display no difference in their attachment to the nation. Brazilians seem to value both their racial and national identifications, but generally choose to emphasize both when given the chance. These results have been confirmed by in-depth interviews, which show that, even among those respondents most attached to their black (*negro*) identity, the national identification was not seen as contradictory to their racial identification. In fact, if anything, they felt more closely tied to the country and its history (Silva 2010). In addition, the affirmation of their negritude was commonly associated to the idea of racial mixing – it rarely involved the exclusion of whites from their personal networks or national ideals (Silva and Reis 2010). In other words, the strengthening of racial identification in Brazil does not seem to pose a threat to national unity, even when it comes accompanied by racially-targeted social policies, as we discuss next.

The celebration of Brazilian race relations, however, co-exists with a widespread awareness of racial prejudice and inequality in the country. This is an inconsistency that lies at the core of Brazilian race dynamics and may provide clues to understand its recent transformation.

4.3. Perceptions of Equality, Difference, and Inequality in Brazil

National surveys show that over 90% of Brazilians perceive income inequality as being too high in the country (Scalon 2004). Such a perception is shared across race and class – and similar results have been found in surveys with elites (Reis 2004). Similarly, about 90% of Brazilians agree that there is racial prejudice in the country, a perception equally shared across race and class (Datafolha 2008, own tabulations), which is also shared by elite respondents (89.4% of which acknowledged that there is racial prejudice in the country). Yet, when asked to rank the most important problems of the country, inequality and poverty commonly appear as important issues, but not race and racism. In the 2003 survey, unemployment, health, and inequality were ranked the most important problems by respondents of all socioeconomic groups. Likewise, in the 1990 elite survey, respondents listed lack of education first (44.5%), and poverty and inequality second (40.3%) when ranking the two major impediments to democracy. In both surveys, race and racism did not appear on the priority list (Reis 2004[4]). In the remainder of this section we discuss possible explanations for this discrepancy. We believe that the recent debate about affirmative action and racial quotas provides possible answers.

During the 1990s, a timid debate about the implementation of racial quotas emerged in Brazil – a result of the perception that despite oscillation in the general pattern of socioeconomic inequality in the country, racial inequality has remained stable (Telles 2004). But it is since 2003 – partly as a result of the repercussion of the United Nations' (UN) Durban Conference against Racism and Discrimination (2001) – that affirmative action policies have started to be implemented throughout the country (Htun 2004). The most well-known are racial quotas in the public universities throughout Brazil. Ten years after the first universities created racial and social quotas for access, most of these institutions in Brazil (65 of 94 state and federal universities), including some of the most prestigious and selective ones, had implemented affirmative action in their admissions. 51 of them have introduced quotas, with 37 of them at least partly targeted at Afro-Brazilians (including *negros*, *pretos* and *pardos*) (Guimarães 2011). In 2013 quotas racial and social quotas for access became mandatory in all federal universities.

In 1994, before the widespread implementation of affirmative action, elites were asked in the survey if they agreed to give more opportunities to blacks (*pretos*) and browns (*pardos*) via racial quotas. Nearly all elite respondents (90.1%) rejected racial quotas. Such a rejection is partly related to the fact that most respondents also said that racial

4 Tabulations by authors from IUPERJ dataset (Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro), from "Strategic Elites Survey" 1994 – not available for public use.

inequalities were a result of lack of education (41.8%) and a historical inheritance (26.6%). Yet even the majority of those who believed discrimination was the source of racial inequality (33% of the total sample) rejected racial quotas (Reis 2004[5]).

In contrast to elite attitudes, national survey results from 2008 (Datafolha 2008, own tabulations) show that a small majority of Brazilians support affirmative action policies in its most radical form – racial quotas. In addition, this support grew slightly between 1995 and 2008 – the period in which the debate about racial quotas in public universities gained public attention. In 2008, respondents were asked if they were for or against a 20% quota in universities: 51% of the respondents agreed with the quota. In addition, 62% of respondents partly agreed or agreed completely that "quotas for *negros* are important to broaden access to universities to the whole population" (Datafolha 2008, own translation).

There are no significant differences in support for such a quota system across racial groups, even if *negros* (defined here as the sum of those who identify as *pretos* and *pardos*) tend to support it slightly more often than whites. It is only when we separate these groups by education that a clear divide emerges, indicating that it is higher education, not race, which makes a difference, as shown in Table 2 below. This is one of the particularities of the Brazilian case, when compared to South Africa or the United States: low-income whites are for affirmative action while highly educated blacks are against it.

Table 2: Attitudes towards Racial Quotas by Racial Groups (Brazil). Answer to the Question "Are you in favor or against quotas, i.e. that places are reserved for blacks (*negros*) and Afro-descendents in universities?" (% in favor)

	Below High School	High School	Higher Education
Whites	53	45	27
Browns (*pardos*)	53	53	38
Blacks (*pretos*)	61	52	31

Source: Datafolha 2008, own tabulations.

5 Tabulations by authors from IUPERJ dataset (1994) – not available for public use.

Support for race-based policies, however, has to be put in the context of support for other social policies. In 2003 (Fundação Perseu Abramo national survey), respondents were also asked to choose the best option to reduce the inequality between *negros* and whites in access to university. They were given four options. Small majorities across racial groups believed improving basic education was the best way (53%), followed by opening more places in colleges (24%), offering free preparatory courses for *negro* students (13%), while only a small minority believed the best policy was to reserve part of the places for *negros* (7%) (FPA 2003). When asked what type of quota should be created, the majority believed that they should equally be reserved for students coming from state high schools (regarded as lower quality when compared to private schools regardless of race or color (59%), followed by opposition to any type of quota (22%), and only then reservation for *negro* students (14%) (Datafolha 2008, own tabulations). In short, when given the option, most Brazilians prefer universal policies (improving the education system) to targeted social policies. And when given the choice between socioeconomic and racial targeting, they prefer the socioeconomic option.

These results indicate that racial inequalities are perceived as intrinsically linked to socioeconomic inequality. Support for racial quotas in this context appears as support for socioeconomic inclusion policies. In other words, racially targeted and universal policies do not appear here to be perceived as contradictory, but rather as complementary. Yet, Brazilians do seem to prefer universal policies that target socioeconomic inequalities more broadly – and even in their support for racial quotas, equality of conditions still seems to be the main goal. The recognition of difference, therefore, appears to be closely related to the recognition of inequality – it emerged from the awareness of persistent racial inequalities.

Yet, difference and inequality may occupy distinct spheres of exclusion. The same 2003 survey asked people if governments should intervene to reduce racism and discrimination, or if this was a problem the people should solve themselves with no government interference. Overall, more people believed that racism is a problem for the people to solve (49% vs. 36% who believe it is a government obligation to intervene) (FPA 2003). Responses were not significantly correlated to race and education, although blacks in general and respondents with higher education (black and white) tended to support government intervention more often – the latter in partial contradiction of their rejection of affirmative action policies. These results are particularly puzzling due to the overall belief that social policies to address inequalities are a government responsibility, as discussed by Elisa Reis (2004). They might indicate that Brazilians perceive racial inequalities as intrinsically linked to socioeconomic inequalities, but racial prejudice

and racism are defined as moral problems to be solved by education and socialization, rather than through redistributive policies (Silva 2010).

In short, Brazilians support for affirmative action is conditional – small majorities support racial quotas – with the exception of blacks and whites with higher education who reject it. Large majorities across educational and racial groups, however, prefer color-blind, fully universal criteria. These ambiguities seem to indicate that Brazilians do not understand racially targeted and universal policies as being mutually exclusive – even if they suggest a hierarchy of priorities between the two.

5. Concluding Remarks: Negotiating Equality and Difference – A New Possibility for Society Building?

In the previous pages, we insisted on the idea that processes of state and nation building combine, in various ways, the idea of equality, difference and inequality. It is true that the original European experience in building nation-states was converted into a model emulated elsewhere. Yet, the variable historical circumstances, as well as the political choices made by concrete actors, allowed for significant variations. Therefore, it is only natural that the global re-emergence of difference is also experienced differently across different countries and regions.

We identified three general societal dilemmas concerning the re-emergence of difference as a key dimension. First, difference might undermine the basis of national solidarity. Second, difference may be a threat to universalism, and therefore to equality itself. Third, the emphasis on difference might hide other structural inequalities of society. Taking the ethno-racial dimension to explore the Brazilian case, we drew attention to its distinct solutions for these dilemmas.

Looking at how Brazilians look at difference and inequality, we observed that there are indications that identity differences have been acquiring salience in recent decades, suggesting that actors subjectively value their distinctiveness within the nation, though not necessarily experiencing nationhood and color as “either-or” choices. Despite the growing importance of difference – illustrated by the strengthening of the *negro* identity – the interface of racial and national identifications is not perceived as dilemmatic.

In addition, while support for race-targeted affirmative action is significant, there is clear evidence that most Brazilians still prefer universal policies of inclusion. Highly educated groups, in particular, clearly voice this preference as well as their criticism of targeted policies. Nevertheless, most Brazilians do not seem to perceive these two

policy options as contradictory. Instead, both alternatives seem to be perceived as valuable strategies to improve social inclusion.

Finally, we suggest that the re-emergence of difference as a salient political dimension in Brazil derived from the growing awareness of inequality. Rather than hiding inequalities, recognition of difference is embedded in the awareness of acute inequality.

To sum up our findings, the relationships between difference and equality are clearly shaped by historical circumstances. As suggested by Fraser (2000), no ready-made recipes are available to address concerns about inequality and difference. Policy prescriptions to balance equality and recognition depend on the specific salient dilemmas in each national and historical context. If, through variable paths, the affirmation of equality was an essential condition for the formation of nation-states, the negotiation of equality and difference might play a similar role in the contemporary processes of society building.

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